

## Fund helps needy seniors stay in their homes

*By Ellen Waldman  
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Dorothy had lived in her older home for many years. Her wish, like so many others, was to remain in her home for the duration of her life, if at all possible. As she had aged, her risk of falling had also increased, along with a need for additional supports in her home. After her husband died, there was no one around to do these handyman-type tasks. She had few financial resources for extras beyond her actual daily needs.

What were her options to get her needs met and remain in her home safely?

I recently found out about a wonderful local resource, "Grandma's Porch." This project was developed by Age-Friendly Innovators (541-261-203, [www.agefriendlyinnovators.org](http://www.agefriendlyinnovators.org)), in collaboration with United Way of Jackson County, Rogue Valley Habitat for Humanity, ACCESS, Rogue Valley Council of Governments Senior and Disability Services and other local organizations serving older adults. Here's how it works.

AFI has developed a fall-risk assessment process designed to provide older adults an evaluation of their risk of falling in their home. Basically, it helps lower-income older adults stay in their own homes safely and for as long as possible. It uses Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) criteria, combined with an analysis of those elements in the home that increase/decrease the risk of falling.

The assessment is provided at no cost by National Association of Home Builders Certified Aging-in-Place Specialists (CAPS). The assessments help identify specific fall risk, in-home safety and accessibility issues in the home, and are funded by a grant from the Chaney Family Foundation.

But now, there is something new. "Grandma's Porch" is a fund set up to help those whose needs have been identified through these assessments, but who may not be able to afford the recommended items. It was seed-funded by the Washington Federal Foundation. Most recently, it has been further funded by the Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation.

The fund has supported assistance that ranges from re-positioning a bathroom door so it opens out, to mounting shower and toilet grab bars and repairing under-counter lighting. The following information is from a portion of its website and flyer:

"AFI's "Grandma's Porch" fund has been created to provide vouchers or coupons for the immediate need items to help prevent falls; for example, carpet tape for scatter rugs, grab bars for the tub or toilet area, or a shower seat. Other in-home safety items such as smoke detector batteries, CO detectors, allergen reduction furnace filters or emergency lighting is also available. Grandma's Porch has also created a vetted, bonded, licensed list of handymen and women for those items requiring expert installation."

Something as simple as a set of grab bars may be all that's needed to continue to safely take a shower in your home. Little items can make a big difference in providing a safe environment. If the obstacle of being able to pay for this is removed, then another person can stay in their own familiar surroundings.

On-going funding for this great project will be provided through foundation grants, as mentioned above. Age-Friendly Innovators is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and individual tax-deductible contributions will also support this local resource.

Something else to keep in mind: In a 2014 survey conducted in Oregon of those working with aging adults, home repair scams had affected 45 percent of their clients. According to the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA), one in 20 older adults indicated some form of perceived financial mistreatment occurring in the recent past. Most financial abuse goes undetected, as NAPSA estimates only one in 44 cases is reported. This is huge, and often happens to the neediest people.

A well-established and monitored organization, in coordination with other well-known funding and support services, avoids this whole mess of repair scams. Let's keep our older residents safe in their homes by supporting our local resources, which are focused on doing just that. Find one whose mission resonates with your values and reach out to them with your generosity. Dorothy and her friends will thank you for this.